

Meeting Notes

Public Health Advisory Council of Snohomish County

May 27, 2020 | 7:45-9:15 a.m. | Snohomish Health District | Zoom Meeting

Members present:

Jason Biermann, Snoh. County DEM
Frank Busichio, InterFaith Family Shelter
Jeff Clarke, Commissioner, Mukilteo Water & Wastewater District
Amy Beth Cook, Lake Stevens School District
Lisa George, PRMCE (Chair-Elect)
Robert Goetz, Snoh. Regional Drug Task Force
Patricia Love, City of Stanwood
Korey MacKenzie, Diamond Knot Alehouse (Chair)
Kevin O'Brien, Lake Stevens Fire Department
Sid Roberts, The Roberts Group (Past Chair)
Tové Skaftun, Community Health Centers
Jim Welsh, ChildStrive

Staff Present:

Shawn Frederick
Dr. Chris Spitters
Heather Thomas
Nicole Thomsen
Mary O'Leary
Linda Carl

Members not present: **Brent Hackney**, Brent Hackney Designs; **Lark Kesterke**, United Way; **Midori Larrabee**, EvergreenHealth Monroe; **Karri Matau**, Community Foundation of Snoh. County

Guests: Linda Redmon, Board of Health member; Chief Thad Hovis and Deputy Chief Shaughn Maxwell, South County Fire and Rescue

Recording Secretary: Linda Carl, Executive Assistant

The meeting was called to order at 7:48 a.m. The meeting was held via Zoom video conference.

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Mr. Jeff Clarke and seconded by Mr. Sid Roberts to approve the minutes of the Mar. 25, 2020, meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

School vaccine compliance

Mary O'Leary, health educator in the vaccine-preventable disease program, reported that there are several issues making back-to-school season more challenging for school nurses and healthcare providers.

The COVID-19 outbreak is causing a priority and capacity shift away from standard preventive care, including well-child checkups and immunizations. Data from the Washington State Immunization Information System (WAIS) show significant drops in childhood vaccination during March and April 2020 as compared to the same time last year.

Some families are losing jobs and private healthcare coverage due to COVID-19. The Washington State Healthcare Authority (HCA) reports a steady increase in Apple Health applications in Snohomish County. This shift has the potential to be a burden to local providers who accept this coverage, especially our Federally Qualified Health Care (FQHC) sites like Sea Mar and Community Health Centers of Snohomish County.

New school immunization laws will go into effect on August 1, 2020, for childcares, preschools, and K-12 campuses, both public and private. New students and new immunizations are required to be medically verified records. Parent report of immunization or history of disease will no longer be accepted.

There's also a new definition of conditional status. Children may begin school or child care only if they have received all of the required immunizations they are due to receive and submit the records on or before the first day of school. If more shots are needed, they may attend school until the next dose is due. Families then have 30 days to turn in the documentation. Non-compliant students are at risk of being excluded from school until requirements for immunization and/or documentation are met.

The Office of Immunization and Child Profile at the Washington State Department of Health is working with local health jurisdictions to support schools and providers and craft communications for parents. The motto is: "Stay Safe, Stay Healthy, Stay Vaccinated."

SHD's Vaccine Preventable Disease Team will get the messaging out and be available for technical assistance. Ms. O'Leary noted that school district superintendents were instrumental in facilitating changes with the MMR vaccine last year, and we're asking for their support to implement the new laws.

Health Officer update

Dr. Chris Spitters gave a COVID-19 presentation. He noted that we remain in Phase 1 but are looking to a Phase 2 variance, which includes reported incidence, healthcare readiness, widespread testing, case isolation and contact quarantine to limit the spread, and protecting high-risk populations. The variance requirement includes no more than 10 new cases per 100K population in the previous 14 days, which translates to less than 82 cases in 14 days for Snohomish County. Daily case reports reached its peak in late March; now we're seeing the number in the teens for new cases reported each day. The curve is going down and may have reached a plateau. At this point we've had over 3,000 cases with 144 deaths. Community-acquired transmission is decreasing.

Other Phase 2 variance requirements include a surge capacity of at least 20% for the healthcare system and 50 tests for every one positive case. Our current testing is in the ballpark but not at the threshold we'd like. The Health District continues to do all its own case and contact investigations, with some exceptions done by the state. We have 30 contact tracers but need 120; we plan to hire more with CARES Act funds and help from the state. For high-risk populations, the variance requirement is no more than two outbreaks per week. We're working with the state regarding the application process and looking at some metrics that we might not meet right away. We'll continue to encourage limited contacts and "stay home, stay safe" in Phase 2 and even Phase 3. The reproductive rate of transmission is most controlled by limiting the number of contacts, so we continue to encourage staying six feet apart.

During PHAC discussion, Dr. Spitters noted that the risk increases for those in their 50s and above. Those over 70 account for 15% of cases but three-fourths of the deaths. We've seen elevated case rate/hospitalization rate for Latinos but not an elevated death rate; this demographic is disproportionately affected. We haven't analyzed testing and societal distribution of different demographics.

Cloth face masks in stores/buildings is expected, as well as outdoors if there isn't a six-foot buffer with non-household members.

To move to Phase 2 we should be below 80 cases in the previous two weeks. We continue to move in the right direction, especially with long-term care facilities. If the numbers continue to decline, we could apply for Phase 2 within two to four weeks. Our overall position looks good.

Ms. Nicole Thomsen added that Dr. Spitters does a press conference with the County Executive every Tuesday and Friday morning, which is posted on the Health District blog and Facebook page.

Coronavirus communications

Ms. Thomsen asked for feedback regarding communications to the community and if there are unmet needs within the PHAC sectors. PHAC members mentioned:

- Lack of detail on what constitutes a "physical barrier" in businesses/workplaces

- How do businesses require/encourage cloth face masks and what if a client/customer refuses to wear one. Perhaps a “no mask, no entry” sign could become the norm.
- How are face masks worn in restaurants with people eating/drinking?
- Don’t know if government and health officer authority has been communicated clearly enough.
- Clearer guidance is needed regarding inspectors, especially across jurisdictional lines. Mr. Jason Biermann noted that there are multijurisdictional groups that meet regularly and have conversation around topics like this.
- Perhaps connect with current platforms, like the homeless task force, to further communications.
- For business owners, who is responsible for ensuring people follow the rules, and what’s the business’ liability if they don’t enforce it.

Other considerations:

- Business owners should be reminded to flush out their pipes before drinking/using their water.
- Social distancing and masks are good, but not a perfect shield; it may offer a false sense of security.
- There’s division in the community regarding masks; will people feel welcome if they’re not wearing one? Mr. Biermann noted that there are planning efforts regarding unrest and a table-top exercise is planned to manage this concern, including de-escalation tactics and messaging. Mr. Robert Goetz added that they’re already looking at messaging to mitigate conflicts as we reopen the county; messaging needs to go out to all stakeholders, such as crime-prevention groups and other typical avenues for messaging. It may be more challenging to get messaging to specific groups.
- Mental health inequities with students is a priority in the schools.
- Food security is a concern. This is also a possible touch point for targeting populations.

Ms. Thomsen noted that the City of Everett is working on a toolkit for businesses, which should be available in a few days. Please email Ms. Thomsen with any follow-up questions or comments.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 9:18 a.m.

The next meeting of the PHAC is Wednesday, July 22.